

Subpart G—Taking of Marine Mammals Incidental to U.S. Air Force Launches, Aircraft and Helicopter Operations, and Harbor Activities Related to Launch Vehicles From Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), California

SOURCE: 79 FR 10026, Feb. 24, 2014, unless otherwise noted.

§ 217.60 Specified activity and specified geographical region.

(a) Regulations in this subpart apply only to the 30th Space Wing, United States Air Force (USAF), at Vandenberg Air Force Base and those persons it authorizes to conduct activities on its behalf for the taking of marine mammals that occurs in the area outlined in paragraph (b) of this section and that occurs incidental to:

(1) Launching up to 15 space and each year from Vandenberg Air Force Base, for a total of up to 75 missiles over the 5-year period of these regulations,

(2) Launching up to 35 rockets each year from Vandenberg Air Force Base, for a total of up to 175 rocket launches over the 5-year period of these regulations,

(3) Aircraft flight test operations,

(4) Helicopter operations from Vandenberg Air Force Base, and

(5) *Delta Mariner* (or a similar vessel) operations, cargo unloading activities, and harbor maintenance dredging.

(b) The taking of marine mammals by the USAF may be authorized in a Letter of Authorization only if it occurs from the space launch complexes, launch facilities, and test pads on north and south Vandenberg Air Force Base and the Vandenberg Air Force Base harbor on South Base.

§ 217.61 Effective dates.

Regulations in this subpart are effective from March 26, 2014 through March 26, 2019.

§ 217.62 Permissible methods of taking.

(a) Under Letters of Authorization issued pursuant to §§ 216.106 and 217.60 of this chapter, the Holder of the Letter of Authorization (herein after the

USAF) may incidentally, but not intentionally, take marine mammals by harassment, within the area described in § 217.60(b), provided the activity is in compliance with all terms, conditions, and requirements of the regulations in this subpart and the appropriate Letter of Authorization.

(b) The activities identified in § 217.60(a) must be conducted in a manner that minimizes, to the greatest extent practicable, any adverse impacts on marine mammals and their habitat.

(c) The incidental take of marine mammals under the activities identified in § 217.60(a) of this chapter is limited to the indicated number of Level B harassment takes on an annual basis of the following species:

(1) Harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*)—31,161;

(2) California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*)—465,129;

(3) Northern elephant seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*)—80,024;

(4) Northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*)—62,500; and

(5) Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*)—1,824.

§ 217.63 Prohibitions.

Notwithstanding takings contemplated in § 217.62(c) and authorized by a Letter of Authorization issued under §§ 216.106 and 217.66 of this chapter, no person in connection with the activities described in § 217.60 may:

(a) Take any marine mammal not specified in § 217.62(c);

(b) Take any marine mammal specified in § 217.62(c) other than by incidental, unintentional Level B harassment;

(c) Take a marine mammal specified in § 217.62(c) if NMFS determines such taking results in more than a negligible impact on the species or stocks of such marine mammal; or

(d) Violate, or fail to comply with, the terms, conditions, and requirements of this subpart or a Letter of Authorization issued under §§ 216.106 and 217.66 of this chapter.

§ 217.64 Mitigation.

(a) When conducting the activities identified in § 217.60(a), the mitigation measures contained in the Letter of Authorization issued under §§ 216.106